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RURAL DISTRICT OF BRIDGWATER

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR 1951.

R. H. WATSON, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.P.H.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH



RURAL DISTRICT OF BRIDGWATER

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1951

Health Department,
Albert Street,
BRIDGWATER.

August, 1952.

To:-

The Chairman and Members of the
Bridgwater Rural District Council

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for the year 1951. Apart from measles, there were no major outbreaks of infectious diseases in the District during the year. There was an outbreak of a mild type of influenza, but although the morbidity rate was high, there was at no time any serious dislocation of services. The vital statistics show no significant change from those of the previous year.

I wish to thank the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee for their support, Mr. Maile and his assistants for their excellent co-operation, and the Heads of other Departments for their assistance during the year.

I am,
Your obedient servant,

R.H. WATSON.

STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1951

Area (Acres)	86,613
Population (Registrar General's estimate) 1951	20,080
No. of inhabited houses on 31st December, 1951	6,300
Rateable value on 31st December, 1951	£84,356
Sum represented by ld. rate on 31st December, 1951	£ 344.18.4d.

In the following tables the figures in brackets represent the corresponding figures for the previous year.

Live Births

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Legitimate	147 (152)	150 (148)	297 (300)
Illegitimate	10 (8)	5 (5)	15 (13)
	<u>157 (160)</u>	<u>155 (153)</u>	<u>312 (313)</u>

Birth Rate per 1,000 of estimated resident population 15.54 (15.98)

Comparative figure for England and Wales	15.5
Comparability factor for the District	1.12

Still Births ... 4 (6)

Still Birth Rate per 1,000 total (live & still births) 12.82 (19.17)

Death Rate. Total number of deaths 254 (231)

Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 12.65 (11.78)

Comparative figure for England and Wales	12.5
Comparability factor for the District	0.87

Infantile Mortality (Deaths of infants under one year of age)

Legitimate	8 (7)
Illegitimate	= (1)
	<u>8 (8)</u>

Rate of all infants per 1,000 births	25.64 (25.56)
Rate for all legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate live births	27.68 (23.33)
Rate for all illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births	Nil (76.92)

Other Deaths

Deaths from Malignant Neoplasms	33
Deaths from Measles	1
Deaths from Whooping Cough	-
Deaths from Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	1

CAUSES OF DEATH DURING 1951

CAUSE OF DEATH	M	F	TOTAL
ALL CAUSES	126	128	254
1. Tuberculosis of respiratory system	5	1	6
2. Other forms of tuberculosis	-	-	-
3. Syphilitic disease	-	-	-
4. Diphtheria	-	-	-
5. Whooping Cough	-	-	-
6. Meningococcal infections	-	-	-
7. Acute Poliomyelitis	-	-	-
8. Measles	1	-	1
9. Other infective and parasitic diseases	-	-	-
10. Malignant neoplasm of stomach	2	3	5
11. Malignant neoplasm of lung, bronchus	2	1	3
12. Malignant neoplasm of breast	-	3	3
13. Malignant neoplasm of uterus	-	5	5
14. Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	7	10	17
15. Leukaemia, aleukemia	1	-	1
16. Diabetes	2	-	2
17. Vascular lesions of nervous system	10	14	24
18. Coronary disease, angina	13	12	25
19. Hypertension with heart disease	8	9	17
20. Other heart diseases	24	29	53
21. Other circulatory diseases	4	3	7
22. Influenza	5	10	15
23. Pneumonia	3	8	11
24. Bronchitis	13	7	20
25. Other diseases of the respiratory system	3	1	4
26. Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	3	1	4
27. Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	1	-	1
28. Nephritis and nephrosis	3	1	4
29. Hyperplasia of prostate	2	-	2
30. Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion	-	-	-
31. Congenital malformations	1	1	2
32. Other defined and ill-defined diseases	9	7	16
33. Motor vehicle accidents	2	1	3
34. All other accidents	2	1	3
35. Suicide	-	-	-
36. Homicide and operations of war	-	-	-

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS AND
CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

The following table sets out the cases of notifiable infectious diseases that occurred in the Rural District during 1951. The table is drawn up after making the necessary amendments to the original notifications owing to corrections in diagnosis by either the practitioner or the Medical Officer at the Isolation Hospital.

Disease	Cases notified	
	1951	1950
Acute Poliomyelitis	1	5
Meningococcal Infections	1	1
Erysipelas	-	3
Measles	371	39
Opthalmia Neonatorum	-	1
Pneumonia	13	15
Scarlet Fever	26	13
Whooping Cough	63	75
Food Poisoning	4	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	2	2
Dysentery	1	-
TOTAL	482	155

It will be noted that the high incidence of infectious diseases is due almost entirely to the usual biennial outbreak of Measles. Arrangements have been made by the Public Health Laboratory Service to supply doctors with serum which may be used to give a passive immunity to young and debilitated children who are closely exposed to infection with measles, and who would be exposed to undue risk by contracting the disease. The immunity thus produced is of a temporary nature and is used simply to tide them over a period of undue risk. The serum is available to all doctors.

Infantile Paralysis

Although there was a moderate incidence of infantile paralysis in Somerset, only one case was notified in the Bridgwater Rural District.

Diphtheria

No cases of diphtheria were notified. This satisfactory state of affairs is almost entirely due to the nation wide immunisation campaign which was begun in 1942. The following table shows the incidence and number of deaths from diphtheria in England and Wales since 1944 and clearly shows the progress which has been made.

Year	Deaths	Corrected Notifications
1944	934	23,199
1945	722	18,596
1946	472	11,986
1947	244	5,609
1948	156	3,575
1949	84	1,890
1950	49	962
1951	34 +	699 +
	+ provisional	

The reason that this campaign was so successful was that, with the horrors of diphtheria fresh in their minds, parents were anxious to have their children immunised, with the result that a large percentage of the susceptible population were protected. However, the very success of the campaign is tending to produce an atmosphere of false security, and while parents are still willing to have their children immunised, many are not prepared to exert themselves to have it done. This is proved by the number of children who are unprotected on entering school, but who are then immunised simply because the doctor calls at the school and this relieves parents of all effort, other than signing a consent form.

By far the most effective means of persuading people to have their children immunised, is the direct and personal approach of the doctor, district nurse and voluntary welfare workers but, nevertheless, it is felt that the annual publicity campaign which is undertaken by the Council in conjunction with the Borough Council, plays a useful part.

Children may be immunised by their family doctor, by the school doctors, or at the infant welfare clinics which are now held regularly in most parts of the District.

Diphtheria Immunisation

The following table shows the number of children who completed a course of immunisation during the year.

Aged under 5 years	Aged 5 - 15 years	Total
273	32	305

The method of protection commonly in use is to give each child two immunising injections at the age of one year, and a third reinforcing injection early in school life. The reinforcing injection is most important to ensure protection during the early school years, and 226 such injections were given during the year.

Scarlet Fever

An outbreak of Scarlet Fever occurred at a mixed residential and day school for girls. At first four cases occurred and it was found that a member of the staff with a chronic sinus infection was a carrier of the offending organisms. She was removed from contact with the pupils and no further cases arose. However, a month later further cases of Scarlet Fever began to occur and in all, a further nine cases were admitted to hospital. It is considered that this second outbreak was caused by a "return case," i.e. one of the first batch becoming reinfectious after the cessation of treatment. All the secondary cases were confined to one dormitory.

This outbreak caused a considerable amount of work to the Public Health Department.

Tuberculosis

There were 23 cases of respiratory and 5 cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis notified during the year. The figure for respiratory cases is 3 more than the previous year.

National Assistance Act, 1948, Section 47.

This Section of the Act enables Local Authorities to apply to Court for an order to secure the care of persons who, by reason of infirmity, old age or other conditions, are unable to care for themselves and are not receiving from other people proper care and attention, and who are living in insanitary conditions. Several cases were dealt with, but in no case was it found necessary to proceed for a Court Order. In all cases alternative means were found to alleviate unsatisfactory conditions.

Food Poisoning

An outbreak of food poisoning was investigated. Early in the outbreak pressed tongue manufactured by a local butcher came under suspicion, and further sales were stopped, pending investigation. It was not possible to obtain specimens from patients, but samples of pressed tongue taken from different infected homes and from the butcher's shop all showed heavy growth of a germ *Staphylococcus Aureus*, which, clinically, was the organism responsible for the outbreak. An identical germ was also obtained from a nasal swab taken from the butcher who had had a cold when the pressed meat was manufactured. The remainder of the meat was destroyed and no further cases of food poisoning occurred. In all, eight cases were notified to the Health Department.

Housing

The following table shows the progress made during the year:-

	Houses erected during year		Houses in course of erection		conversion to flats or dwellings		Temporary such as Army Huts etc.
	Perm.	Temp.	Perm.	Temp.	Perm.	Temp.	
Local Authority	60		28				23
Private Enterprise	14		3		10		
TOTAL	74		31		10		23

Total number of Post War Houses completed by:-

(a) Local Authority 325
(b) Private Enterprise 32

Houses required:-

(a) to replace those unfit 732
(b) to abate overcrowding 8
(c) where conditions are unsatisfactory, e.g. two families not living in the same house, but not included in (a) or (b) known

Total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year 813

Houses occupied that have been condemned as totally unfit 2

Number of houses found overcrowded 11

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

1. Water Supply

Samples of water have been regularly taken from the various sources of supply during the year, and generally speaking these have been satisfactory. Except in special and isolated circumstances the quantity of water proved sufficient for the needs of the District.

Progress was made with the Over Stowey scheme, and at the end of the year work was nearing completion.

Supply	Number of examinations	Report	
		Satisfactory	Not satisfactory
1. Fiddington	14	9	5
2. Goathurst	12	12	-
3. Nether Stowey	14	12	2
4. Thurloxton	12	12	-
5. Willoughby	22	21	1
6. Greinton	5	1	4

There is always a danger in using these small untreated, or partially treated water supplies. Owing to the remoteness of the source of supply, human contamination is not likely, but should it occur an outbreak of enteric fever might result. The water supply at Greinton was a private one and because of the unsatisfactory results obtained from bacteriological examination, representation was made to the owners. Eventually the supply of water to that area was taken over by the Council and the offending springs were eliminated from the system.

2. Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The records given in the Chief Sanitary Inspector's report show the number of insanitary conditions dealt with.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR
FOR 1951.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my twelfth Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1951.

Staff.

The following alterations affecting the staff of the Department took place during the year.

In February the Council decided that the Additional Sanitary Inspector should assist the Engineer's staff as required in the inspection of property under the Building Byelaws.

In June, by resolution of the Council, Mr. R.J. Organ, General Assistant, was transferred to the Treasurer's Department, his position in the Public Health Department, in the opinion of the Council, having become redundant.

Complaints and Nuisances.

The number of complaints investigated during the year was 166 an increase of 18 on the previous year. In most cases nuisances were abated as a result of informal action and it was only found necessary to serve 4 Abatement Notices. On inspection a number of complaints were found to be not justified and no further action was taken in regard to them.

Of the nuisances found, 137 were abated during the year. Difficulty was again experienced in securing compliance with informal and statutory notices to abate nuisances, reasons given being the high cost of work and the shortage of labour and materials. The number of visits made in connection with nuisances was 527.

Water Supply.

Samples of water for bacteriological examination were taken from the five sources of supply controlled by the Council at monthly intervals during the year, and additional samples were obtained as found necessary.

Special investigations were made in regard to the quantity and quality of existing water supplies in the Plainsfield, Aisholt and Merridge areas in the parish of Spaxton and at Nythe in the parish of Ashcott, in connection with proposed extension of water mains to serve those areas.

A number of inspections were also made and samples of water taken in regard to pollution of the supply to the village of Greinton.

A total of 112 visits were made in connection with water supply during the year.

Housing.

The number of inspections carried out under the Housing Acts was 292; 6 houses were represented as unfit for habitation and incapable of being rendered fit at a reasonable cost and two Demolition Orders were made by the Council. In 3 cases the Council agreed to accept undertakings from owners to carry out approved works within a stipulated time, and in 7 cases undertakings which had been previously accepted were fulfilled. 4 houses, the subject of Demolition Orders, were demolished during the year.

Building materials continued in short supply during the year, and the labour shortage in the building industry is still acute. The rising cost of building work also contributed to the difficulties encountered in getting repairs and improvements to property carried out.

374 visits were made during the year in regard to the reconditioning and alteration of existing houses and the installation of new sanitary fittings.

84 visits were made to houses in respect to which grants were made under the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts and The Housing (Financial Provisions) Acts.

The Rural Housing Survey was continued in the early part of the year, but on the instructions of the Council all work on the Survey terminated on 30th April, 1951. At that date only 76 houses (excluding Council houses, reconditioned property, houses on Woolavington Estate and recently built houses) remained to be inspected. The decision to terminate the Survey, particularly in view of the fact that it was almost completed, was very unfortunate as apart from the original purpose of the Survey the possession in the Office of a complete record of each house would have been invaluable.

From 1st January to 30th April, 194 houses were inspected and classified as follows:-

Categories:-	1. Satisfactory in all respects	6
	2. Minor defects	45
	3. Repairs and structural alterations	122
	4. Suitable for Housing (R.W.) Acts	-
	4a. Suitable for acquisition	-
	5. Unfit and cannot be repaired at a reasonable expense	21

Re-inspections were made in thirteen cases.

Overcrowding.

Seven new cases of overcrowding were discovered during the year, and six cases were abated by informal action.

Thirty three visits were made in connection with overcrowding.

Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948.

The following particulars indicate the action taken under Part I of the Factories Act, 1937:-

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Insp.	Written Notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authority	89	27	3	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by Local Authority	-	-	-	-
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises)	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	89	27	3	-

	No. of cases in which defects were found				No. of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	Referred To H.M. Insp.	By H.M. Insp.	
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	2	2			
Overcrowding (S.2)					
Unreasonable temperature (S.3)					
Inadequate ventilation (S.4)					
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6)					
Sanitary conveniences (S.7)					
(a) insufficient	1	1		1	
(b) unsuitable or defective	2	2		2	
(c) Not separate for sexes					
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)					
TOTAL	5	5		3	

As a result of informal action, new sanitary conveniences were provided at one factory.

Bakehouses.

Eleven visits were made to bakehouses, and informal notices were duly complied with.

One new bakehouse of good modern design was constructed and brought into use during the year.

Shops.

Twenty inspections of shops were carried out.

General Sanitation.

The following improvements were carried out, generally as a result of informal action:-

W.Cs	79
Baths	41
Sinks	43
Chemical closets	6
Drainage systems	49
Lavatory basins	46
Connections to water main	3
Connections to sewer	6
Larders	8

A number of other minor improvements were also carried out.

Meat and Foods.

Every effort was made during the year to maintain the regular inspection of meat and other food at retail shops and slaughterhouses and 176 visits were made for this purpose.

It is also the practice to inspect the meat of animals killed for home consumption under licences issued by the Food Control Committee, and in view of the percentage of animals found to be diseased, this practice has been found to be justified, 273 visits were made for this purpose.

I give below details of food condemned during the year:-

Beasts.

Carcase and organs	1
Lungs	1

Sheep.

Carcase and organs	7
Plucks	2
Mutton	50 lbs.

Pigs.

Carcase and organs	2
Head and tongue	13
Lungs	1
Mesenteries and intestines	10
Plucks	4
Kidneys	3

Other foods.

Tins, jars and pkts. of various foods	283
Ham	32 lbs.
Bacon	150 lbs.
Chicken	1

Byelaws made under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for securing the observance of sanitary and cleanly conditions and practices in connection with the handling, wrapping and delivery of food, and the sale of food in the open air came into force in the district on 29th January, 1951. Copies of the byelaws were distributed to all known wholesalers and retailers of food, and to the proprietors of catering establishments.

Knackers Yard.

The knackers yard at Dunball is being maintained in very good condition and was visited on 15 occasions during the year.

Milk and Dairies.

The number of retail purveyors of milk on the register is 19, and 15 visits were made for the inspection of dairies during the year.

Ice cream.

The number of premises registered for the storage and sale of ice cream at the end of the year was 44, and 5 premises were also registered for the manufacture of ice cream. Each of these manufacturers produced ice cream by the "cold mix" method, followed by boiling of the product. Ninety three samples were taken during the year the results being as follows:-

- 77 samples were placed in provisional Grade 1.
- 9 samples were placed in provisional Grade 2.
- 4 samples were placed in provisional Grade 3.
- 3 samples were placed in provisional Grade 4.

These results are considered to be very satisfactory.

A total of 124 visits were made in connection with the manufacture, storage and sale of ice cream.

Moveable Dwellings.

101 visits were made during the year in connection with moveable dwellings.

There are now six licensed camping sites in the district, all of which are small. Licences have been issued to station and use eighteen caravans on individual sites, and there is an increasing tendency to use caravans as permanent homes.

Infectious Diseases.

38 disinfections were carried out during the year, 78 visits being made in connection with infectious diseases

Verminous Premises.

42 visits were made to verminous premises and treatment for the destruction of vermin was carried out at 18 premises. 51 visits were made in connection with rodent infestation in addition to those made by the Rodent Operative.

Atmospheric Pollution.

24 observations were made after the receipt of complaints of excessive emission of smoke from the boiler chimney of a hostel. After informal action a considerable improvement was noted.

Summary of Visits.

Water Supply	112
Drainage	347
Knackers Yard	15
Moveable Dwellings	101
Factories	27
Bakehouses	11
Shops	20
Rodent Infestation	51
Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits	121
Nuisances	527
New Work	374
Housing Inspections	292
Overcrowding	33
Miscellaneous Housing Visits	107
Infectious Diseases	78
Verminous Premises	42
Butchers' Shops and Slaughterhouses	176
Animals killed for Home Consumption	273
Dairies	15
Ice cream Premises	124
Miscellaneous Food Visits	36
Housing (R.W.) Acts, etc.	84
Food preparing premises	12
Atmospheric Pollution	24
	<u>3,002</u>

I am, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and
Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

F.A. MAILE,

Chief Sanitary Inspector.

